

APRIL THOUGHTS FROM HOME: OF RAPTURE, - AND OF CARE

NOTES FOR REMARKS

BY

IVAN L. HEAD

14424

PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

to the

20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

THE NORMAN PATERSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, 12 APRIL 1986.

APR 14 1986

HEAD

52

It was not Robert Browning but James Matthew Barrie who once wrote that "The critical time in matrimony is breakfast." He might have added that the critical moment in celebrations of this kind is the after-dinner speech. To those of you who yearn for the pleasures of the dance-floor, I represent an obligatory delay - something like those deathly seconds of silence on CBC radio during the weekly time signal: the pause just before the long dash from the National Research Council. The difference is that the terms of my invitation call for me not to be silent. And though I'm in a way marking a 20th anniversary, I can't claim the accuracy of the official time signal.

Yet accuracy, in a sense, is what I'd like to talk about tonight. It's an old-fashioned word, not much demanded anymore of such as politicians or editorial writers. That it once was an essential ingredient in communication is made clear by Aeschylus when he has Okeanos, the God of the Ocean, say to Prometheus, "... the reward of empty language is always punishment." Of course that was written in an age prior to TV commercials for

stomach remedies and disposable diapers, or, some unkind critics would say, of the practice of TAs grading student papers.

Hyperbole, understandably, has always enjoyed a following. Theodore Schultz, the Nobel Prize Laureate and former IDRC Governor, once told the tale of a colleague, Professor Kimbell Young, whose scholarly manuscript went to the publisher with the precise title "The Early History of Multiple Marriages in the Four Northern Counties of Utah". It had no glamour and no sales prospects. Not so, however, when the book appeared under the title, "Is One Wife Enough?"

Twenty years is an impressive period of time in an institution such as the Norman Paterson School. To historians, I suppose, two decades is little more than the flutter of an eye-lash in the long saga of humankind. Last month, on the occasion of a meeting of the IDRC Board of Governors in India, we were invited to reflect on the lengthy, though discontinuous, chain of human events in that region that began four and a half thousand years ago in the upper Indus Valley, and to note that systems of weights and

measures, of agricultural rotations, of sanitation and town-planning were all practised with skill two millennia prior to the arrival at Taxila of Alexander the Great. To a Calgarian like me, who measures time from the arrival of the CPR in 1883, that's quite a swallow. For anyone, though, a chronicle of endeavour spanning forty-five hundred years makes twenty years seem relevantly insignificant.

In the time frame in which we live, however, twenty years is not insignificant, it is breathtaking. In this electronic and nuclear age, physical, chemical and biological events are measured in milliseconds; intercontinental ballistic missiles are able to travel from launch to target in minutes; satellites orbit the planet in less than an hour; the world's population is increasing by almost one million persons per month; the global inventory of arable land is diminishing by thousands of hectares per year.

As a measurement of the intervals of human behaviour, time has always been a purely subjective concept. Even the word itself evokes different definitions:

"Time", said Carl Sandburg, "is a great teacher."

"Time", said Oliver Wendell Holmes, "is a liar."

"Time", said Henry Luce, "is not a Canadian magazine."

Whatever Time magazine may be, there is no question that the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs is Canadian. And, happily, there is equally no question that it is truly international in its embrace. As a result, in its short history, those associated with it have witnessed a cascade of events across the broad canvas of their interests. Some of them ironic. Five separate Canadian Prime Ministers in a period when one of them - Pierre Elliott Trudeau - became the third-longest-serving Prime Minister since Confederation. A single month - January 1986 - when the technological accomplishment of Voyager II passing Uranus enthralled us and the technological failure of Challenger horrified us. A single year - 1972 - when the north Kenyan discovery of a human skull by anthropologists Richard Leakey and Glynn Isaac

established for us the incredible length of the human saga: 2½ million years and terrorists in Munich demonstrated that savagery and primitive instincts are as evident today in many places as they were in the Rift Valley in the stone age. A period of 240 months which witnessed the passing of Martin Luther King and Ho Chi Minh, of Paul Henri Spaak and Salvadore Allende, of Mao Tse-Tung and Jomo Kenyatta, Dimitri Shostakovitch and Earle Stanley Gardiner, Lester Pearson and Noel Coward, Indira Gandhi, Anwar Sadat, Bertrand Russell, and Olof Palme. Twenty years which spanned such human triumphs as the first human heart transplant by Dr. Christian Barnard and the first solo circumnavigation of the globe by Francis Chichester, both in 1967; and such contrasting human acts as the synthesis of DNA and the gas rupture at Bhopal, the admirable linkage of Soyuz and Apollo in 1975, and the deplorable destruction of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983.

Twenty years in which we have been witness in this country to a lot of heavy metal, not all of it having much to do with rock music. Too much metal led to the closure of the world's largest lead and lead-zinc mine at Faro in the Yukon, and the closure of one of the largest

iron-ore mines at Schefferville. Undependable metal led to the rupture of a zircaloy pressure-tube at the Pickering nuclear generating facility, casting doubt on the economic effectiveness of the CANDU system. Unwanted metal descended from the skies over the North-West Territories in the form of COSMOS 954, and over the Beaufort Sea in the form of a failed cruise missile. And welcome metal, in the form of the Stanley Cup, passed from Uniondale, New York, to Edmonton where the Oilers give every indication that it will remain indefinitely.

A twenty-year period which started with miniskirts, which took Neil Armstrong to the moon, women to the Anglican priesthood, the People's Republic of China to the U.N., Anwar Sadat to Israel, Terry Fox to our hearts, and which concluded with Mr. and Mrs. Marcos in Hawaii and Mr. and Mrs. Duvalier in France. From exposure of the female anatomy in 1966 to exposure of human avarice in 1986.

There is much to think about in that period, and much to give pause. Whether the test of time will leave much to cheer about is something I'd hesitate to bet on.

Indeed, whether the imbecility of human behaviour will even permit a decent test of time is now open to serious question for the first time in history.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the past 20 years is that the world has become so accustomed to rapid change, so enured to continuous carnage both real and fictitious, so indifferent to contemporary political double-talk, that it is incapable of genuine reaction. How can one be indignant at the loss of human life in the face of the base butchery in the Iran-Iraq obscenity, sympathetic to the debt crisis of Latin America in the knowledge of billions of dollars of flight capital, or appalled at the possibility of nuclear Armageddon in the face of weapons-states oblivious to the concerns of any but their own smug advisors? It is too early yet to determine whether the USSR following the Gorbachev ascendancy has put behind it the inferiority so evident in Prague '68, Kabul '79 and Kamchatka '83. Too early, too, to learn whether the USA following the Challenger tragedy may be willing to put behind it the supreme self-confidence exhibited in its SDI declarations, its Kirkpatrick puffery in the Security Council, or its 6th fleet swaggering in the Gulf of Sidra.

One is hard put to conjure up a formula with more potential for instability than the medieval suspicions of the Kremlin coupled with the Victorian bravado of the White House. I would sleep more comfortably if there were some evidence of greater humanity in Moscow and of greater humility in Washington; if the leaders of the two super powers would acknowledge that this is 1986 - not 1917 - that the combination of today's technologies and their outdated politics has produced trends which, unless altered significantly, may well become irreversible, that the magnitude of errors in the nuclear age make them virtually irremedial.

At this moment, the world is overwhelmed with two powerful role models tragically aberrant from the proclaimed ideals of each. And the danger exists that increasing numbers of states will assume that massive military expenditures, overt political interventionism, or increasingly unilateral foreign policies are the norms of international behaviour in these concluding years of the 20th century.

It is not an easy period in which to be sanguine about either state behaviour or human survival. The flaw in

the former is not so much an absence of declared values as it is an inability to respect truth. The threat to the latter is the unwillingness of statesmen to acknowledge the absence of any margin for error. A student of international affairs must ask if language - any language - any longer retains any integrity. We live in an age when typewriters automatically correct spelling errors, yet political leaders escape any sanctions for mouthing the most monstrous of fallacies.

In the long-ago age of Thebes, even a mighty king like Creon was humbled by his impotence before the wrath of the Gods. In opposing her father's will, Antigone said: "For me it was not Zeus who made that order." In this autumn before nuclear winter, one cries out in vain for an omnipotent deity. Or, failing that, some willingness to accept fact, to respect truth, to heed the need for accuracy. Ideally, to permit rational dialogue to share at least equal place with ideological dogma. Yet that is a heavy demand, for it assumes thought and, as Bertrand Russell stated: "Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth - more than ruin - more even than death

Thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit."

Thought is able to do that because of its power to reduce to their bare bones assertions of one sort or another - to emphasize those of intrinsic value and to expose those that are shibboleths. Examples of what I mean are found in those jewels of essays and monographs crafted with such painstaking care by the philosophic giants and scholarly jurists of the past three centuries; intellectual exercises from which evolved the rationale for structured international relations and the basic premises of international law. Hear this from John L. Brierly: "The ultimate explanation of the binding force of all law is that man, whether he is a single individual or whether he is associated with other men in a state, is constrained, in so far as he is a reasonable being, to believe that order and not chaos is the governing principle of the world in which he has to live." It was Brierly who argued as well that any state which claimed to be sovereign was estopped from denying sovereignty to another claimant, and that act diminished the sovereignty of each. Accommodation was needed; Rousseau spoke of "volonté générale".

The evolution of these fundamental jurisprudential concepts permitted the flowering of democratic institutions and societies, the thrust towards egalitarianism in social behaviour, and the cascading consequence of global networks of commerce and communication, of scientific exchange and touristic exploration. These thinkers paved the way as well for the great contest of ideas between two distinct concepts of societal organization and behaviour which now grip the minds of so many. It is the banners of this contest, hoisted by disciples of Marx and Jefferson, but who for the most part ignore or are ignorant of the arguments of each, which now threaten to obscure the vision, the freedom of action, and perhaps the very future of all of us.

This has not been an encouraging spring for those who believe deeply in international comity and the towering goals of social justice and human dignity. Humanity is burdened with three outmoded behavioural concepts at a time when technology has made mockery of each: "just war," "unconditional surrender," and "total war." The first dates back to the beginnings of Christendom and the arguments of St. Augustine, the second and third to this

century. Today's military planners, clothed in the garb of deterrence and armed with weaponry of inconceivable destructive power, give the impression of paying scant heed to such thoughtful strategists as the 4th century Sun Tzu and his advocacy of limited force, of the infliction of the least possible casualties, of the use or threat of force only if a state's objectives could not otherwise be achieved. And the results are at least questionable, at most abhorrent. In World War I, casualties were 95% military personnel and 5% civilian. In Vietnam, they were 90% civilian, 10% military. God only knows what they are in Afghanistan or Nicaragua.

One must face today the fact that neither solemnly concluded international treaties nor the most respected of religious teachings stand in the way of those decent family men in the nuclear powers who have targeted nuclear warheads at centres of population, who demand ever-more-lethal weapons of mass and indiscriminate destructive capability, who refuse to admit that there is no supportable military scenario for the application of nuclear weapons. Thank heavens for the intellectual and moral strength of the United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops which has challenged so convincingly the concept of "just war" and argued persuasively for the much more general Christian ethic of "non-violence."

The world of 1986 is poised at the crest of a perilous slope. Those precepts of decent behaviour that form the basis of every major religion are today perverted in favour of power and privilege. Poverty and authoritarianism are overlooked in the quest for military supremacy and commercial ascendancy. The new standard of normative behaviour is military readiness with only the haziest notion of threat perception. The new technique for the resolution of grievance is the terrorists' bomb. Treaty obligations and international undertakings are viewed as an interference with the pursuit of manifest destiny.

Decency, humanism, self-restraint, and honourable conduct are not today the norms of international conduct, nor are the words even found in the vocabularies of the apologists of the use of force as an answer to every problem, of those who regard diversity and pluralism and accommodation as signs of weakness rather than the resilient fibres of social fabric which we in Canada know them to be.

Faith in technology and disregard for honesty combine to divert attention from the central question of this and every future age: it is whether we are able as a species, beneath the nuclear shadow, to avoid irreversible error. By that I mean error of a magnitude from which the human race would be unable immediately, or perhaps ever, to recover. It's not a theoretical issue. In more than 5000 years of recorded history, the human race has encountered - or caused - innumerable incidents of death and destruction: wars, plagues, famines, and assorted natural disasters of the magnitude of the cyclone and tidal wave that struck Bangladesh last spring and the volcanic eruption which struck Colombia last fall. Recovery periods have extended from days to decades, but recovery there always was. We now face, however, not just a quantitatively but a qualitatively distinct departure point.

We have no direct human experience to draw upon for guidance, because never, in five millennia, has any generation ever faced circumstances of global proportions: of possible nuclear cataclysm, environmental degradation, or economic collapse. Dangers from which recovery may not be

possible. Circumstances in which margins of error are so narrow as to be meaningless.

These kinds of circumstance will not, unfortunately, disappear simply by addressing more money to them. Nor will they disappear by the pretentious assumption that there is a single ideological norm, superior to others, and that its advancement justifies international lawlessness or unilateral interventionism.

Such acts are nothing less than the destruction of the international order which has been so painstakingly constructed and which, in this age of demonstrable evidence of interdependence, is not a luxury but a precondition of human survival. For any country, of any size, to witness without protest this perilous slide is unforgiveable. For Canada, it would be folly.

Harlan Cleveland has recently written: "... it seems to be only in 'postwar planning', undertaken while World Wars are going on, that efforts are mounted to think comprehensively and globally the world cannot afford a large war as a spur to creative institution-building."

Cleveland's is a clarion call for fresh approaches to the issues of governance. Yet what is the predominant response from the most powerful states in the world - apart from indifference, that is? It is best described in the words of Thomas Hobbes, which seem as applicable today as they were in 1651:

"Kings and Persons of Sovereigne authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns, upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continually Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War. But because they uphold thereby the Industry of their Subjects, there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of Particular Men."

In the parlance of 1986, "let's go after those defence contracts, after all they stimulate the economy." Yet even Hobbes, bless his heart, believed in the sanctity of solemn covenants and argued "pacta sunt servada." He would be thunderstruck at the thought of after-the-event

treaty re-interpretation as much as after-the-event historical reconstruction.

International relations conducted by force cannot be permitted to become the norm. Bullies on the block must be contained. Two concepts absolutely vital to the welfare of Canadians will otherwise be sacrificed - multilateralism internationally and pluralism domestically. Convenient though it may be to disregard the autonomy of others, to act without accountability, to assume that even the loftiest of principles excuses the basest of conduct - this must not be accepted by thoughtful men and women.

In a slightly different context, Jacques Maritain said it all in a pair of sentences: "The two concepts of Sovereignty and Absolutism have been forged together on the same anvil. They must be scrapped together."

The systematic dismantling of international institutions, the failure to acknowledge and respond adequately to the social and economic squalour which lie at the heart of so much unrest, the acceptance of

double-standards of political conduct - these rank in my judgement as acts as deserving of outrage and criticism every bit as much as the deranged acts of despicable terrorists. Liberty, and social justice, and environmental wholesomeness are not without economic cost, but neither are unrestrained defence expenditures, or military adventurism, or jingoistic flag-waving. The function of dedicated scholars in institutions such as this is of vital importance not just to this decade, or this century, but a prerequisite to there being a next decade, a next century. Thoughtful, accurate research and reflection is an essential element if there is to be human survival. The importance of the contribution of the Norman Paterson School in the past twenty years is self-evident; the importance of its contribution in the future cannot be underestimated.

Recent months have taken a cruel toll of some of the intellectual architects of this period: Frank Scott, Norman Mackenzie, Philip Jessup, Alva Myrdal - the last three in a matter of days: January 26, January 31 and February 1. Scott, MacKenzie, and the many great Canadians of that period earned the respect of their peers world-wide, and earned as well the right of the rest of us to speak and

to be heard. One of that generation was coincidentally a faculty member of the Norman Paterson School and Chairman of the Board of Governors of IDRC: the late Lester Pearson.

In the speech introducing Mr. Pearson as the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Gummar Jahn, Chairman of the Nobel Committee, said "[he] believes that the time will come when it is possible through the United Nations to realize the dream of a world-wide community of all nations and races, and he feels that recognizing this ideal in some form serves to remind us of our ultimate and underlying kinship even with our opponents. There is a value to this, if we retain any humility, we will not despise."

Senator Norman Paterson subscribed to that belief and it remains the obligation of all of us not just to reflect humility but as well to demonstrate commitment to a human, and humane, community.

And isn't that what accuracy, in a way, is all about? Eric Partridge tells us that the origin of the word means "to give care to," or "to be careful about." It was

Thomas Jefferson who wrote: "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

I salute that, as I congratulate you all on your 20th anniversary, wish you many more years of accomplishment, and thank you for the opportunity you have given me to share this evening with you.

Lest you think from my title or my text that it is my intent to denigrate fine careless rapture, be it the first or the thousandth, or that I wish to leave with you a message of pessimism, or a sense of hopelessness - for that is not my intention - let me offer one final quotation - this time from the other Browning, Elizabeth Barrett:

"... a voice said in mastery while I stov -

'Guess now who holds thee?'

'Death', I said, but there

The silver answer rang - 'Not Death, - but Love.'"

Thank you.